

Daily life 141

Chapter 141 The Odd Couple

Yang Qing noted despite Zhi Da being unanimously branded a disloyal stingy braggart, the person in question seemed to wear all those insults as a badge of honor.

He even puffed out his chest a bit and donned a smug smile as he fired back as good as he got sparing no one. Zhi Luoran would occasionally step in defense of her brother; other times, she would stand on opposite sides against him like a sneaky diplomat.

Yang Qing detected the two kids clearly felt at home in this place as even their guards dropped the moment they stepped in while the regulars in the restaurant even if they were giving Zhi Da grief one could see the gentleness and care in their eyes and demeanor as they looked at the two siblings completely different to the experience they had at the Earthvine restaurant.

"It seems it's not just the food that makes them love this place so much," silently muttered Yang Qing.

Just as he was about to head up to the second floor, the doors to the kitchen opened as a spirited elderly man walked out with a ladle in his hand. He had an average build but despite his mildly wrinkled face his footsteps were firm and his back was ramrod straight like a spear with eyes that had an unquenchable youthful fire in them.

"Pipe down will you!!!! Even my aging ears are ringing from all the ruckus you all are causing," yelled the Old man as he threateningly waved his ladle around towards the guest however his gaze and demeanor turned softer the moment he saw Zhi Da and Zhi Luoran.

"Da'er, Luoran'er, you finally decided to come by after almost a week. If you'd waited any longer probably I and grandma Wang would have passed by then. You shouldn't stay long without passing by," said the old man he even faked back pain to try and draw sympathy which seemed to have worked on the two siblings who quickly rushed to his side. Meanwhile, the rest of the guests threw looks of disdain as they clicked their tongues under their breath at the old man's shamelessness.

In their eyes, there was a very high likelihood of the old man and his wife, outliving them all. The restaurant has been around for 70 years and in all that time not once had the old man fallen sick or tired or closed the restaurant.

Even when the customer numbers grew, the speed and quality of service didn't reduce and they never hired an extra hand either. It has always been the old man, grandma Wang and their two sons who took orders and delivered food.

The customers cursed the old man's antics under their breaths which drew a threatening glare from him before he hurriedly went back to pretending to be a frail old man.

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"Grandpa we promise not to disappear, it's just work has been busy of late so we didn't get time.

As an apology, we even brought you a new guest. This is big brother Yang Qing. We are showing him around and he asked me to bring him to the best restaurant in Purple City so I obviously brought him here," Zhi Da smoothly said whilst pointing towards Yang Qing.

"Grandpa, it doesn't hurt anymore does it?" Zhi Luoran worriedly asked as she kept kneading his back much to the delight of the old man.

"No, it's much better now thanks to your quick and skillful action. Your massages are the best, better than what any vitality restoration pill could do. Thank you very much Luoran'er," said the old man as he exaggeratedly straightened his back and stretched it to show it was okay which drew giggles from Zhi Luoran.

"You must be young master Yang Qing? We may not be as great as little Zhi Da made us out to be but I can promise we put our sincerest effort and care into the food we serve. I hope you will enjoy it. There's a free table upstairs, you will also find one of my sons up there to take your order," said Grandpa Wang.

"Many thanks, Owner Wang for your hospitality, I couldn't ask for anything more. This type of restaurant suits my tastes more, good food and a good environment to enjoy it in," said Yang Qing as he cupped his fists.

There was a glint of interest that flashed in his eyes as he eyed the old man and the old woman he had detected behind the kitchen door secretly monitoring him.

"What an interesting pair of old folks," thought Yang Qing as he made his way up the stairs.

To the rest of the people here, the two seemed like simple elderly people in the middle stages of the foundation realm but that couldn't be further from the truth.

The moment Yang Qing entered the restaurant he detected the fluctuations of two top rank sky grade artifacts. Curious as to why two high-grade artifacts would be doing in a seemingly simple restaurant he discovered they were infact concealment artifacts worn by two people. After a deeper probe that's when he discovered they were used to hide the cultivation bases of the wearer.

Outwardly 'frail' grandpa Wang seemed like an old man in the fifth stage of the foundation establishment realm when in actual fact he was an old man in the peak of the core formation realm while the old lady cautiously eyeing him behind the kitchen door was someone at the 10th stage of the core formation realm.

While the old man seemed to have come out to quiet the ruckus, Yang Qing felt he had come because of him and there were a couple of reasons that fueled that guess other than the concealed artifact he had on. One was the seemingly ordinary ladle in his hand that was in fact another top rank sky grade artifact. And another was the way the old man carried himself from the look in his eyes to the situational awareness.

He had reflexively positioned the ladle in a way he could quickly defend himself while the old lady behind the door was on alert to back him up at the slightest sign of trouble.

This type of reaction and look could only be seen in someone who had been baptized by countless battles till its lessons were hard drilled into them to the point it was a natural reflex. Only seasoned generals or those exposed to constant dances with death could have that kind of look.

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Other than outwardly finding their presence interesting like discovering a secret in the open that others didn't know and the person in question not knowing that he knew, he had no intention or care in digging further.

Whether they were spies or part of some organization or some old couple in retirement he had no interest in their affiliations or their agendas in Purple city. All he cared about was that they had the same skills in the kitchen as they did their situational awareness.

But if he were to guess about their origins it wouldn't be too hard. He had a few guesses in mind, from how well-equipped they were, their power levels, and the location they were in, those three clues gave out a lot. Only a few groups in Red Maple Empire could afford to give out three top-rank sky-grade artifacts and have peak-rank core formation experts in their ranks.

Then again the old couple could just be retired rogue cultivators with no affiliations which would perfectly fit their bill too.

Yang Qing decided to pay this matter no heed as he had given himself an hour to relax before he officially started on his evaluations and he wasn't going to waste it on guesses when he could be eating to his heart's content.

The upper floor's layout was just as similar to the ground floor except that it had a few balconies with a few tables and chairs in them.

Yang Qing chose one of them with the two siblings joining him. The moment he sat down, a stockily built young man that resembled the old man came up to his table to take his order. There was no menu so the young man just told him what was ready and he could choose from there.

"I'll have two of everything. What about you two? What do you want? I'm buying. Just think of it as me saying thank you for bringing me here," Yang Qing hurriedly added worried Zhi Da would refuse.

Zhi Da looked to his sister who nodded back before he finally nodded back in return.

"Many thanks, big brother Yang Qing. In exchange I'll make sure to give you the most in-depth tour of the city," said Zhi Da.

"I look forward to it," said Yang Qing as he smiled.

Though inwardly he sighed since he would be leaving immediately after the meal. His plan was to make a call to the nearest Order branch and have them transport the two siblings to the headquarters with his recommendation so they could be given accommodations until the entrance examinations started.

From their looks, he had thought they were having a hard time here so offering them a chance to start someplace else would be welcomed. But seeing their relationship with the Wang couple and the other customers he wasn't sure they would readily agree. This was without even putting their wary overcautious personalities into account. He had a feeling they would most likely doubt if his connections to the Order were real and not some scheme to kidnap seeing how they both doubted him when he said he knew Zhong Quan.

He decided to push the matter to the back of his mind. He would present the offer when the time came. If they accepted, it would be the best outcome but if they didn't it would be okay too. They may seem like they were struggling but they had one peak core formation expert and a late-stage core formation expert who genuinely cared for them and most likely secretly watched out for them. This finally answered the question in Yang Qing's mind of how the two siblings survived on their own. They may be smart and cautious but before overwhelming strength it meant nothing.

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"Have you decided what you will have?"

"Pan-fried dumplings and blueberry cake," they both answered simultaneously with eagerness in their tone.

Chapter 142 Ginkgo Tea

Yang Qing lightly chuckled at their preference. They may act a bit too mature for their age but there were some things they couldn't overcome and that was a love for sweet things.

"Okay," said Yang Qing as he shook his head.

"Can you bring me the sweet fermented rice wine first, a single large bowl will do and for them, bring them the 500-year-old ginkgo tea," said Yang Qing as he finished his order.

"Big brother Yang Qing it's not that we are being inconsiderate and unthankful but can we have the pearl milk tea instead?" Zhi Da hesitantly suggested.

Both he and Zhi Luoran flinched when they heard the ginkgo tea being mentioned as if they'd been afflicted with unpleasant memories.

"It's good for you, especially your bodies. There's no refusing it but after you drink the ginkgo you can have the pearl milk tea too but you have to finish the whole ginkgo tea otherwise I'll terminate your services as my guides," Yang Qing solemnly said as he narrowed his eyes to add an air of seriousness.

The 500-year ginkgo tea was about one of the few things in the restaurant that could be bought with a spirit stone. It cost a single low-grade spirit stone.

The tea was great at improving concentration and blood circulation in addition to its healing properties that are brought about by strengthening the vitality of the user. The older the tree the better these effects were pronounced and the worse its taste. It always had a woody texture to it that got more pronounced the older the tree was.

During the brief scan Yang Qing did on the two siblings he realized their bodies were overdrafted. When one was in the body refining stage in addition to precious herbs that were used to refine their bodies they also required a high intake of energy-rich foods to keep up with the requirements of their bodies.

The two kids were clearly not able to meet those daily needs so their bodies always run empty. In the short term, there was no problem but if it went on for long they would damage their bodies' foundations which though could be remedied would end up costing a lot.

The ginkgo would help remedy those problems for atleast a month. Ideally, for better effects, Yang Qing would have preferred to give them some of the vitality rejuvenation pills he had on him that he used as candies but they required one to have atleast a minimum cultivation base at the seventh stage of the foundation establishment realm otherwise if someone below that stage attempted to consume those pills their bodies would blow up from the overwhelming energy contained in them.

The two Zhi siblings were only in the bronze stage of the body refining stage no different than mortals, they wouldn't be able to handle the potency of those pills so the tea was a better substitute since the

tree it was sourced from was an earth rank herb that worked on those at the body refining stage and qi refinement stage.

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"Okay," they both softly said as they bowed their heads.

The old man's son had a strange glow flash in his eyes as he eyed the interaction between Yang Qing and the two siblings. He bowed immediately after as he left to give out the order to the kitchen.

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(Kitchen of the Wang's restaurant)

The old man was currently seated in one of the chairs trembling on his hands as he exchanged a grim look with an elderly lady in a brown apron who was seated on the seat opposite to him. There were beads of sweat dripping from her head.

"Honey what do we do about him?" asked the elderly lady.

"What can we do? It took all I had just to remain standing in front of him trying to act casual.

There was no pressure coming from him, not even a little bit but every bone and sense within me was screaming for me to run away as far as I can. In all my years on the battlefield I've experienced that sensation not more than five times and every single time a calamity descended soon after," the old man weakly smiled in self-deprecation as he placed his still trembling hands in front of his eyes. He kept clenching and unclenching them to try and calm them down but his hands had betrayed him.

"Do we tell them? He might be outside help for the others," said the old lady.

"There's no need for that. I doubt they would be able to afford someone of his caliber, if they did they would have already stirred up a storm instead of biding their time. Besides I believe that the matter has

already been reported by someone else not unless he snuck in. But I doubt that. I don't get that sense from him," said the old man as he got up from the chair still shaking a bit but he stabilized himself with the table before he picked up some of the ingredients and the kitchen knife next to it.

The elderly lady mirrored him as she too got up and started preparing some of the ingredients.

An eerie silence ensued as they went about their work. The silence was broken when their son who had just taken Yang Qing's order walked in.

He frowned when he walked in as he found the atmosphere too strange. Usually, he would find his parents bickering as they cooked but right now there was an air of tension and grimness in the place that accompanied the silence.

"Is something wrong?" He pensively asked.

"Has the customer made his order?" asked the old man as he threw a stern stare at his son which made him swallow the follow-up questions he wanted to ask. He knew that look well, if he insisted on butting into their matters all he would end up with was a painful beating.

He painfully sighed when his thoughts reached this point. He was almost 40 years old but he still had to leave with the fear of receiving a beating from both his parents. He and his younger brother had thought of escaping more than once but with the connections of their old man, they'd be found within a day and get a world-shaking beating for their attempt at escape.

"Is this still the same monster that dotes on Zhi Da and Zhi Luoran? They always show a side I never knew existed. Maybe when I breakthrough into the core formation realm the beatings will hurt less," he enviously thought as a new fire of hope got lit in his eyes.

But it was extinguished immediately after when he noticed the impatient glare from the old man.

Chapter 143 Forces In Purple City

He hurriedly gave out the order of Yang Qing and the two siblings which drew surprised looks when he mentioned that Yang Qing had specifically ordered the Ginkgo tea for the two.

"Atleast those two brats get to drink it again after refusing, hiding for weeks, and making all sorts of excuses not to drink it when we put it on their menu for their sakes," said the old man.

"Isn't your stupid blander one of the reasons they refuse? You know how those kids are and you went ahead and put it on the menu and put that charge in there. There's no way Zhi Da would have accepted us giving it to him for free all the time especially if it cost that much.

Sometimes I think those kids are too conscientious and reserved," said the old woman as she sighed in pity.

"Take this. The rest will be ready in a few minutes," said the old man as he handed a tray that had a red clay kettle filled with the ginkgo tea and a large bowl filled with fermented sweet rice wine next to it.

"Give them these too," he said as he added a few biscuits that were lying around into one plate.

Their son skillfully picked the tray up as he headed back.

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"As we wait for the food to arrive maybe you can tell me more about this city. The different organizations around, especially those that stand out above the rest, the things they sell, and maybe a bit of the power structure around this place. I noticed a lot of powerful people walking in and out of the city when I arrived.

The city's administration must be pretty impressive for keeping so many people in line," said Yang Qing as he decided to make a gentle probe and find out about the Mo family whose descendant had their sights on the two siblings.

"The power structure? Big brother Yang Qing what do you intend to do with such information?" Zhi Da warily asked.

"What do you think?" Yang Qing answered with an easygoing smile which made Zhi Da only frown even further.

"I thought you said you'd answer any question I asked and you'd provide all accompanying information as part of the tour. Are you already going back on your word even after I agreed to that huge fee you charged," said Yang Qing as he placed high emphasis on the huge fee in his tone.

"Big brother it's not that I'm going back on my word it's just that the information you're asking for is a little sensitive and there has been a crackdown on the dispensation of such information of late," said Zhi Da.

"Don't worry I'm not planning anything. No need to overthink the whole matter I just want the general information that any random passerby can easily know. The general outline of the city will do," said Yang Qing.

Zhi Da's and Zhi Luoran's expressions eased a bit once they heard Yang Qing's requirement though Zhi Da would occasionally throw a suspecting glance his way.

"Fine. I will give you the general overview and nothing more. If you insist on getting more details than that we will have to part ways as I don't want to risk my life or my sisters or grandpa and grandma Wang and the rest of the customers here," Zhi Da firmly said.

"I'm okay with it but before that let me put this up for secrecy," said Yang Qing as he took out a small green shell that was filled with runes. He tapped on it as a small bubble formed around them which then disappeared from view.

Both Zhi Da and Zhi Luoran had their eyes glow as they eyed the shell.

"Big brother this is?" Zhi Luoran eagerly asked as she excitedly pointed at the shell.

"This is the shell of a green-veiled tortoise. It's a little treasure that blocks eavesdropping and sound. With this, you won't have to worry about anyone knowing what you said," Yang Qing said as he played around with the shell.

He had already set up a stronger barrier around them through a small blue-grade cultivation art and the barrier was stronger than the protection the shell provided. However, he decided to add the shell to the

mix due to its dazzling display which would put the Zhi sibling's minds at ease rather than telling them there was an invisible barrier that no one at the early stage of the palace realm and below could penetrate. They would both paint him a shameless braggart and maybe even clam up.

"So can we begin," said Yang Qing as his voice pulled the two out of their excited investigation of the green-veiled tortoise shell.

"Okay," Zhi Da reluctantly said as he tore his eyes away from the shell. He paused for a few seconds to arrange his thoughts together.

"Let's start from the top. The Purple city is governed by the city lord however unlike other city lords around the Empire he has operational autonomy within the city so he doesn't answer to the Purple grass county governor. Whereas in other counties the governors are usually above the city lords within their counties. They can decide the approval or dismissal of the city lords from their offices.

But here it's a different case. The city lord was personally put into that position by the royal family and it's also widely known that he is a member of the royal family, same as the captain of the city guards," said Zhi Da as he paused to eye the things that were on the tray that was being delivered by grandpa Wang's son.

Zhi Da's and Zhi Luoran's eyes lit up when they saw the biscuits but they dimmed when they saw the red kettle releasing piping hot steam of the ginkgo tea.

"I'll bring the rest in the order of their completion. Please enjoy these while you wait," he said as he placed the tray on the table.

"Thanks," Yang Qing said as he took his bowl of milky white fermented sweet rice wine while the two Zhi siblings reluctantly poured themselves cups of the ginkgo tea.

Zhi Da waited until Grandpa Wang's son had left before he resumed his introductions.

"Though on the surface it seems like the City lord is the one in charge of the city, those who have lived here know that in fact Purple city is ruled by three forces; the City lord's administration, Five noble families, and six organizations of which the Earthvine restaurant is one of them,"

Crack!!

The somber mood created by Zhi Da's reveal was shattered by the biscuit Zhi Luoran had been trying to silently nibble.

"Hehehe," she nervously laughed when both Zhi Da's and Yang Qing's eyes got trained on her.

Chapter 144 Weird Power Dynamic

Zhi Da decided to ignore Zhi Luoran's nibbling as he went on with his introduction to the layout of Purple city.

Yang Qing in the meanwhile was thoroughly enjoying the bowl of fermented sweet rice wine. It may not have been made with ingredients of high quality like the ones he was used to from the restaurants around the Order but what it lacked in ingredients quality was more than made up for with technique.

It had a sweet freshness to it along with a mild sour coolness to complement it.

"Their identities aside, their cooking skills are the real deal," thought Yang Qing as he scooped another filling with his spoon.

Zhi Da and Zhi Luoran were enviously looking at his bowl due to Yang Qing's crescent-eyed facial expressions that made it seem like it was the tastiest meal in the whole world.

"I'm not giving you any, you're too young to appreciate meals of such caliber. Drink your ginkgo tea and biscuits," said Yang Qing as he pulled his bowl closer to him like a beast defending his kill from other predators.

"Tsk stingy big brother," Zhi Da muttered discontentedly under his breath. He wasn't alone in this as shy Zhi Luoran muttered a few things under her breath too though it was less audible and sounded more like mosquito noises.

They begrudgingly drank their tea, closing their eyes as they drank it and gorging themselves with biscuits immediately after as a means of curbing the woody taste.

"As I was saying, there are three forces ruling Purple city; the city lord's administration, the five noble families, and the six organizations," Zhi Da said as he used three condiments on the table to represent the three forces.

"Now this is purely my guess though anyone with half a brain would notice it; Of the three forces, the five noble families could be considered slightly weaker among the trio.

This is rather ironic because they make the most noise when flexing their authority around the city. Though they act with a lot of bluster like they own the place, especially their younger members, they always act within certain bounds that do not cross the bottom line of the city lord.

This is why the city lord turns a blind eye to most of the things they do, not unless his interests are interfered with, then he steps in. But normally, he lets them be, to fight among themselves. They are a boisterous bunch trying to outdo the city lord, the six organizations, and even within themselves.

They are pretty ruthless toward one another, one would even doubt if they were really from the same Empire," said Zhi Da as he mockingly chuckled.

"As for the six organizations, they seem to have a decent relationship with the City lord's administration. I don't know if it's me reading too much into something that's not there but I've always felt the attitude of the City lord and his people is strange when it comes to those organizations," said Zhi Da as he held his chin in a pensive look.

"I always felt the same too," Zhi Luoran suddenly chimed in.

"Strange how?" asked Yang Qing as he directed the question to Zhi Luoran who had a look that seemed to say she wanted to contribute.

Zhi Da made an inviting gesture for her to take over.

"I don't know how to put it, the difference is more like a sense. You see when the people from the city lord's office interact with the noble families they always have a different air about them. While they are

still mindful of their identities as noble families it's not more out of fear or deference but more out of basic politeness and decorum.

They can smile and show respect but if the noble family in question steps out of line they would not hesitate to take action against him in a heartbeat. But when it comes to their interaction with the six organizations it's completely different. It almost seems like the interaction between a subordinate and his superior with the city lord administration being the subordinates in this scenario.

When the six organizations compete amongst themselves which sometimes results in damage to the city or its residents the administration always seems like it's doing something to address the issue but they never do and only say so to keep up appearances. But when it comes to the noble families, when their fights reach a certain extent the administration never hesitates to drop its weight on them.

Atleast that's the sense I always get. You can take my observations with a grain of salt big brother Yang Qing," Zhi Luoran softly said as she took a cup of the ginkgo tea to wet her dry throat. She hesitantly picked it up before she downed a huge gulp.

Zhi Da looked at her with a hint of admiration and pity as he too downed his out of a sense of camaraderie of two people going through the same torment.

"My sister and I are of the same opinion on the matter and I think grandpa Wang and grandma Wang are of the same opinion as well because of how they constantly nag us not to cause a ruckus at the doors of those organizations. Not like we have the ability to do so or the time. They worry and nag too much sometimes," Zhi Da said as he lightly chuckled.

"Mmmh those are some interesting insights you two have shared. Your dream of opening up an information agency might actually work," said Yang Qing in admiration of the two.

"It's nothing much we just use our eyes well that's all," Zhi Da said trying to put up a face of fake humility. But one could see the aura of smugness oozing out of him from the compliment.

Zhi Luoran lightly giggled as she raised her head up as if asking to be complimented more.

"So who are the five families?" asked Yang Qing as he shook his head at the reactions of the two siblings.

Of the three forces ruling Purple city, he was clueless about the five families. But when it came to the six organizations even without asking he had an informed idea of their identities especially if they were on the same level as Earthvine restaurant.

This informed idea came from the scroll that had an updated list of the different organizations spread about in the areas he would be conducting his evaluations. He had gone through some of the organizations in Red Maple Empire when he stumbled onto the Earthvine restaurant. It was then that he noticed the peculiarity of Purple Grass County since it had five more rank 4 organizations that were of the same caliber as the Earthvine restaurant.

Yang Qing's rumination of the information he had parsed through on the flight over was interrupted by the arrival of plates of food.

There were two plates stacked to the brim with pan-fried dumplings. The two Zhi siblings had their glowing eyes glued to it. Meanwhile on Yang Qing's end was a plate of fried rice, a large bowl filled with beef and broccoli stir fry, a bowl of dan dan noodles, crispy golden hot scallion pancakes, and a bowl of tomato egg soup.

Just the scent coming from the hot meals made the stomach of the trio loudly rumble.

"Please enjoy," said grandpa Wang's son as he turned and left to bring the remaining order since Yang Qing had ordered two of everything.

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"Where were we? Aah, the five families...The five families are; the Mo family, the Zhang family, the Gong family, the Chen family, and lastly the Gui family.

Of the five, the Mo family can be considered the strongest, actually, the reason the noble families can be considered a ruling force is in part due to the presence of the Mo family. Their forces are the largest and from what I hear their patriarch is a palace stage expert.

Maybe it's because of this that they have the nastiest reputation, especially from their young descendants who..." just as Zhi Da was about to hurl a torrent of accusation he hurriedly shut up as he cautiously gazed around.

"The barrier is still up no one can hear you," Yang Qing comfortingly said once he saw his wary look.

"Big brother I can see you're a person of means but please avoid going to the White orchard villa if you can. Most visitors like going there understandably so since It has the reputation as being the best place to have a meal, drink or rest but it's also the place where the descendants of all these noble families frequent, more so the Mo family.

They treat that place as their own backyard and unquestionable things have happened behind those doors. As an outsider with no backing, I'd advise you against going there.

If you want a place to stay I know of a few good places. It may not be as luxurious as the White orchard villa but atleast you'll be able to rest peacefully and your safety guaranteed as opposed to what may happen if one of those scions set their sights on whilst in the villa.," Zhi Da solemnly said.

"Many thanks for your consideration Zhi Da, I'll keep it in mind," said Yang Qing as he smiled thankfully.

"Can I ask you two something? Though it's okay if you refuse if you feel uncomfortable answering," asked Yang Qing.

"What is it?" Zhi Da asked with a puzzled expression on his face.

"The both of you are not from here, are you?" Yang Qing slowly said.

"What do you mean!?" Zhi Da hurriedly asked as he leaned backward before he tried to correct his posture to put up a front that everything was okay and he wasn't just stunned by the question. His voice had also risen by a few decibels as it shook which he quickly tried to mask. Zhi Luoran at his side had her pupils constrict in fear when the question was asked.

Chapter 145 Yang Qing's Advice To The Two Siblings

"Figures," Yang Qing muttered to himself. During his interaction with the two siblings, there were a few outliers that he noticed in the way they talked among other things that made him suspect their origins.

"Before I say anything, don't worry you're not in any trouble and I'm not someone from the Empire either or have any remote affiliations with them," Yang Qing softly said trying to calm the two siblings who despite trying to hide it were visibly terrified.

Since his monarch sense was always up he could already feel the shaking of their legs, the elevated heart rates, and even the holding of their breaths. Each and every signal that their body gave out was as clear as day to him through his monarch sense.

When he saw his statement did little to alleviate the tension they had, he couldn't help but sigh in wonder if he was careless or impatient in bringing up the matter. With the way those two were looking at him, it seemed as if given a chance they would jump out the balcony and run to parts unknown.

"Since I've already opened that box, I might as well go all the way," muttered Yang Qing as he picked up a scallion pancake.

"You see I'm not that good with subterfuge or any other techniques related to it but I am pretty good at spotting it. I wasn't good with it at first but with time due to the nature of my job I gained a hands-on experience at it and got really good at it otherwise I'd get reprimanded, fined, and get sent to the field all the time.

So for my sake, I honed my awareness to the point it became a natural habit. Because of it, I find myself subconsciously hyperaware about certain things in my surroundings even without meaning to and I'm naturally curious, so it doesn't help either.

Every nuance, every expression, every gesture, and every word whether inane or important, I take it all in with keenness. Though I'm sure even with all that there are plenty of things that escape my eyes and ears, It's a big world after all but when it comes to you two I'm more than certain you're not from here.

And why would I bring all this up? It's not like it's strange for people to move from country to country and from the flow of people to the city, it doesn't seem like the Empire has a shortage of people immigrating in to settle with the way things are around the world.

The reason I brought the matter up is actually for your sake," said Yang Qing as he took a bite from the scallion pancake.

"Mmmh this is rather nice. You guys should try some with your dumplings. Said Yang Qing as he picked a few and put them on both their plates. When he moved his hands Zhi Da defensively put his hands in front of his sister afraid Yang Qing would try something.

"You need to do better at masking your reactions there Zhi Da. Even if someone had a faint suspicion of your origins, your present reaction would solidify those suspicions further that there is definitely something and it's not small either.

When you approached me earlier you did a better job of hiding your true emotions than you are now. And please drink the ginkgo tea before it gets cold and loses some of its potency. It will help mend your hidden injuries and the overdraft sensation constantly affecting your bodies. When sallow skin tones begin appearing in cultivators even ones at the body refining stage like yours, it's never a simple matter that one can ignore. If you neglect it for too long it will turn into a sequela that will need the services of a skilled medical expert to remove and expensive herbs ranging from the earth grade up to the sky grade," Yang Qing solemnly said as he narrowed his eyes which made the two siblings inadvertently take their cups despite their fears and drink sips subconsciously.

"Before I tell you how I discovered you both are not from here and my reasons for bringing it up there's something I feel I need to tell you both especially you Zhi Da.

Pride means nothing if you have to exchange your life and the life of someone you love just to keep it, especially if that pride prevents you from accepting the help you desperately or admitting that you need it.

You need to ask yourself this, does holding onto that pride help you out of the situation you are in or does it only bury you further?

If it's the latter, is there any use in keeping it? It is okay to ask for and accept help, especially for those in your circumstances, and if you are that burdened by it just make sure to note down every favor you have received and pay it back when you're powerful enough to do so rather than refusing help all because of some misguided notion that it would be rude to do so or you want to get yourself out of the situation with your own two hands.

If the world really worked that way there'd be no need for sects, clans, or other organizations. People would just rise to the top and be hegemony with their own effort and no support whatsoever. But alas it doesn't work that way, though there might be exceptional individuals who are actually able to rise to the top alone but how many are they? and even those that do usually have their own special circumstances that enable them to do so.

Are you one such person Zhi Da? Zhi Luoran?," asked Yang Qing as the two kids lowered their heads in guilt and shame.

If you're not then use everything at your disposal to live not just to survive but live, just as long as it doesn't cross your bottom line as a person.

There's no need for me to add more to that, you're both smart kids so you both know where I'm getting at," Yang Qing meaningfully said as he gently smiled.

He had a feeling the old Wang couple must have tried to help the kids and with their means, there was no way the two kids would still be stuck at the bronze stage of the body refining realm or overdrawed their bodies. The two must have rejected their help.

"We do," Zhi Da solemnly said as he raised his head. Zhi Luoran raised hers a few seconds after though hesitantly with guilt showing on her face. She even started to nervously fiddle with the biscuits to try and deflect the awkwardness she felt from her guilt.

Chapter 146 Yang Qing's Pitch

"Good and if you really do put some thoughts into my words then it won't be too long before the Zhi information agency is up and running. I'm even tempted to be an early investor," Yang Qing teasingly said to lighten the mood.

"Really?!" Zhi Da suddenly asked as he hoisted himself up on the table with excitement showing in his eyes.

"Why not? I happen to think that you both would be pretty good at it given sufficient resources and time," said Yang Qing. These were his true thoughts as he admired their level of insight. With sufficient training and resources, he couldn't help but wonder what heights they would reach.

"Maybe they could join the Shadow hawks. But their training is ruthless with high fatalities and dropouts. I don't know if I should recommend them to it. Based on their fearful reactions earlier it seems they have more going on and it couldn't have ended well either judging by their guarded reactions," thought Yang Qing as took another scallion pancake.

This time instead of taking a direct bite from it he decided to dip it in the tomato and egg soup first before taking a bite.

Crunch!

Yang Qing groaned in relish as he savored the taste of his new combo.

Zhi Da seemed to hesitate about something before he finally gritted his teeth and decided to speak.

"Big brother how did you know we are not from the Empire not that I'm admitting we are not from the Empire. I just want to know so I can improve my Intel gathering skills.

It's purely for the sake of our information agency. The better I am at my job the more money I can make which should be a welcome thing since you're an investor after all," said Zhi Da with eager eyes and a fake laugh he was using to hide his nervousness.

"Me too," Zhi Luoran hurriedly added as she looked at the scallion pancake Yang Qing had placed on her plate. She seemed to be in a dilemma about picking it up or going with the pan-fried dumplings. In the end, she went with the scallion pancakes as she sighed in relief as if she had passed through an enormous hurdle.

Pfft!!!

Yang Qing quickly tried to stifle his laughter at Zhi Luoran's antics but Zhi Luoran heard him which led her to bury her head behind the scallion pancake in her hand. It didn't help that Zhi Da started laughing too.

"Well, it was a few things. You two picked me out of the crowd for a reason and if I had to guess, it was because of the robe, right?" said Yang Qing as he pointed at his robes.

"Yes," they both nodded as they sheepishly laughed especially Zhi Da when he remembered that spiel he had blurted out about Yang Qing's lofty bearing and being fated.

"Not many can tell the quality of the robe and those that do either have a certain level of cultivation base or they have had exposure to robes of this class. Either of these two scenarios means the person who notices it isn't simple.

Two kids with a body refining realm cultivation noticing my robes, of course, that would make you stand out and just having good eyes wouldn't cut it. Everything else aside, at the very least it means at some point in your life you have interacted with robes of similar quality. And not that I'm underestimating the Red maple empire but I doubt they have robes of this quality and even if they do maybe only those at the higher levels like the emperor or princes would have access to it."

The void mimicry silkworm was a hard spirit beast to track due to the areas it inhabited. It had no offensive powers but its camouflaging skills and its preference for inhabiting areas with unstable spatial fluctuations made it a hard beast to capture. Even after one captured it, converting the silk it produced into a robe required the skills of someone who was at least in the blue grade in terms of their craftsmanship. Just a single robe made of the silk would cost upwards of 100 high-grade spirit stones.

The two siblings may have not known what material it was made out of but they must have interacted with robes made out of silk from the void mimicry silkworm for a long time till it registered in their subconscious. Atleast this was what Yang Qing thought.

"The royal family has distinctive features due to their bloodline which none of you exhibit that can only mean you interacted with the robe someplace else that's not the Empire.

The second one was when you were mentioning the emperor or the royal family there was no reverence or caution when mentioning him or his family almost as if he was another geezer or passerby to you. I doubt even the noble families would be that brazen. You also couldn't hide your contempt for the noble families and it isn't purely from their bad reputation but something intrinsic like they are beneath you. It was evident in your tone and mannerisms when you were talking about them.

And lastly, your subconscious habits that highlight you had a high upbringing. You may not even notice it since it's something you were used to doing before birth.

The first two things you can easily remedy but the last one would need a lot of effort for you to transform them into a conscious behavior instead of an unconscious habit," said Yang Qing as he decided to help himself to a small cup of their ginkgo tea since he felt his throat dry up.

"Big brother just who are you?" Zhi Luoran asked wide-eyed while Zhi Da's jaws were hanging loosely on the table with pale skin like he had just seen a ghost.

Yang Qing lightly chuckled as he felt a little smug seeing their looks of shock.

"I wonder if the old couple will have the same reaction if I broke their cover," thought Yang Qing as a mischievous glint flashed in his eyes.

But he decided to push those thoughts away as he moved on to his real goal for the whole thing.

"I don't know about your pasts and I'm not going to ask you about it either. Everyone is entitled to their privacy and secrets. But I know that you both seem like you're hiding from someone hence your reason for being in the Empire and the most crowded city to boot.

I highlighted those few things so you could work on them and keep your covers well. Though if you do want to grow those skills I could help you or if for some reason you feel tired of your current lifestyle and need some place to start over, I could help you with that..," Yang Qing paused as he eyed the two siblings who had deep thoughtful looks on their expression. Though they seemed tempted by Yang Qing's words they were also wary.

"What do we have to do to be trained in those skills?" Zhi Da asked, choosing to ignore the second option as he thought despite the background Yang Qing may have it would be difficult to match the background of what they were hiding from.

Yang Qing noted Zhi Da's choice of words and he could guess the reason behind it which made him inadvertently chuckle as he wondered what Zhi Da's reaction would be when he told him he was from

the Order. He doubted whether their background no matter how illustrious it was would be at the level where it would stump the Order.

"Well, if you want to learn those skills all you have to do is.....ELLIE!!!!!!," Yang Qing abruptly paused as his look turned grim.

"Excuse me for a bit," said Yang Qing though only his voice was left behind as he had disappeared like a formless wind from his seat leaving the two Zhi siblings with dumbfounded expressions and waves of shock hitting them

"He is not at the foundation establishment realm?" Zhi Da absentmindedly said as his voice cracked.

Chapter 147 Chance At A Fresh Start

Zhi Da and Zhi Luoran stayed seated in their chairs for a little while before they hurriedly got up and started looking around from the balcony.

They looked at the streets first, but they didn't seem to spot Yang Qing and no one walking around seemed to have noticed anything amiss. They then moved their gazes to the skies but they still didn't see any sight of him. It was as if the Yang Qing that they had just shared a meal and had a conversation with, was nothing but an illusion.

"Big brother, where do you think he could have gone?" asked Zhi Luoran.

"I don't know but based on his expression it seemed to have been a dire emergency. I didn't expect big brother Yang Qing to be so powerful. Even without interacting with us, just with his cultivation base alone I doubt there's much we can hide from him and here I was full of myself because of my acting skills and us gaining a gullible rich client," said Zhi Da as he dryly laughed with pools of sweat forming on his back.

He was joking around with a powerhouse and he had no idea. If things had gone wrong, he and his sister may not even know how they died.

"Do you think he will still let us call him big brother?" asked Zhi Luoran with some worry in her tone. Though she seemed like she was asking a question it seemed like it was more like she was airing her concerns.

"I don't know," Zhi Da said as he sighed. Today was not an easy day for them.

At the start of the week, the black viper had increased the percentage of the amount they would be given as their cut. He had been struggling along with his sister to try and reach that quota while still having enough to survive on. Earlier today he held out on the amount he was supposed to give but was caught by one of their members.

Luckily he was only given a beating and a double fine that had to be paid by the end of the day.

It was why he was so ecstatic when he stumbled upon Yang Qing, a rich-looking young person. He thought he was their way out only to end up with their identities exposed and now the person they thought was just a gullible foundation establishment youth turned out to be someone with a terrifying cultivation base.

"I think he will. He seems like a nice person. He doesn't look at us with the same eyes as the others do when they see us. He even bought us lunch even though the ginkgo tree was thrown into the mix," said Zhi Luoran as she stared at the sky with glowing eyes trying to see if she could spot Yang Qing amongst the clouds.

"Maybe he can help us. He did say he could help us start over," added Zhi Luoran in a hopeful tone.

Zhi Da sighed when he saw this. Some part of him wanted to latch onto the hope that was budding in his heart but he knew what they were dealing with wasn't an easy matter.

"Luoran while Big brother Yang Qing may be someone in the palace realm seeing how he disappeared into thin air but there may be a chance he might not be able to help us.

Even if the organization he is a part of is powerful do you think they would risk offending our clan just to protect two children at the body refining stage whom they don't even know, all at the word of big brother Yang Qing?

We've all seen the politics of big clans and organizations. The clan's interests always come first before the individual no matter how talented they are. We saw it with father and mother," Zhi Da paused as he gritted his teeth with deep sorrow and anguish flashing in his eyes.

Zhi Luoran moved to her seat as her lips started quivering and tears balanced in her eyes.

"Luoran it's not that I want to dampen your hopes but I don't think there is anyone that would want to risk falling out with a clan that has existed for almost 100,000 years and is known to have several domain experts, all for a couple of kids.

But even though those are my thoughts I am willing to ask big brother Yang Qing for help when he comes back.

The past few years have not been easy. A chance at a fresh start no matter how slim the odds would not be a bad thing and I don't know why but I've been feeling uneasy the whole day almost as if someone was watching us.

The black viper has been making a lot of moves of late by accepting more members almost as if they are preparing for something. Even if big brother Yang Qing doesn't help us, having him take us someplace else before we get embroiled into whatever the Black viper is cooking up would work too," said Zhi Da as he ruffled Zhi Luoran's hair.

When he and Zhi Luoran came to Purple city with their last savings four years ago he didn't expect them to survive this long. They may be smart, intuitive and have a few skills from their background to rely on but even he wasn't arrogant enough to think they would have survived on smarts alone in a world where strength dictated everything.

He always felt it was only due to luck that they survived this long and off late that luck seemed to be drying out.

Yang Qing's earlier words about asking for help woke him up. He still behaved like he had his illustrious background and perks to rely on when infact all he had were delusions of his past and his sister.

"I'm no longer Zou Li but Zhi Da now. It's high time I accepted the fact," Zhi Da silently muttered as he ruefully smiled.

"If we want to enlist big brother Yang Qing's help we will have to tell him everything about our past so he knows what he is getting into. We both need to prepare ourselves for the consequences that may come after because it may not go as we wish," said Zhi Da as he stared at Zhi Luoran in the eye.

Mmmh!!

Zhi Luoran firmly nodded with resolve.

"I will miss this place though, with grandpa and grandma Wang and the rest," Zhi Da said as he sighed.

"Me too," Zhi Luoran softly muttered with sadness in her tone.

.....

Kitchen

"Did you feel that?" said grandma Wang said in a shivering voice as the knife in her hands shook and dropped to the floor.

"He really is in the palace realm and by the looks of it that aura seemed even more powerful than Dong Qiu's," said grandpa Wang with a heavy look on his face.

When Yang Qing left he released a bit of his aura in his haste. Grandpa and grandma Wang who were already wary and had their spiritual senses up were hit with that aura. A brief exposure made their bodies freeze in fear.

....

Above the skies outside Purple city.

"Truly worthy of a spirit beast with noble bloodline," said a lavishly dressed young man in white robes that had gold embroidering in his sleeves and an image of a gold-colored bamboo sown on his coat.

He had blonde hair and was young looking seemingly in his early thirties and had a golden hairpin holding his hair.

He was currently pulling a golden rope that was tied around something that was hiding within a whirling wind that produced loud bird-screeching noises.

He formed a few hand seals that made the rope grow in girth as a faint red light appeared on the rope.

"With the flood dragon tendon binding rope tying its movements down and you two attacking it to drain its energy, it's only a matter of time before it's successfully captured," said the golden-haired young man as he addressed the two men opposite him who had surrounded the whirling wind.

One of them had sword-like eyes and orange-red hair with a robe that didn't lose out to the golden-haired young man. As for the last person he was an elderly man that had a mildly plump build, he had on simple white robes but he too had the symbol of a gold bamboo on his robe.

The orange-red-haired man sighed as he charged in with his sword while the elderly man threw a powerful punch that seemed to produce the sounds of a tiger's roar as it moved.

They matched their rhythms perfectly with the golden-haired young man showing apt anticipation and excitement in his eyes that had a hint of greed.

"YOU DARE!!!!" Yang Qing's roar echoed in the area that even the clouds seemed to part.

Before the trio could even register who the owner of the voice was, there was a loud boom as the golden roped got snapped.

A blinding white light that had hints of purple lightning crashed into the elder's fist first who was then blown a few hundred meters away as the purple lightning separated from the white light crashing into the orange-red-haired man's sword.

There was a huge almost metallic sound of collision between the purple lightning and the orange-red-haired man's sword.

A grim expression appeared on his face as his sword creaked as he was being forced back. His hands got charred in the process up to his elbows but they quickly regenerated.

The white light disappeared and in its place was an apathetic-looking Yang Qing.

Chapter 148 Yang Qing Vs Three Palace Realm Experts (1)

The three gentlemen present all had wary looks as they stared at Yang Qing, especially the elderly man and the orange-red-haired man with a sword.

They had both clashed against Yang Qing, though briefly, that interaction left them with shockwaves running through their hearts. The elderly man had his wrists fractured with bone showing while the orange-red-haired man still felt his arms tingle from the lightning attack even though his hands had healed.

His pupils constricted when he finally saw the object clad in purple lightning that he had clashed against. He had assumed it was another weapon that matched the grade of his sword if not better but when the blinding purple lightning disappeared all that was left behind was a smooth green jade-like bamboo that was about the length of an arm. It gently floated back to Yang Qing's hand.

"Ellie it's okay," softly said Yang Qing as he placed one of his hands into the whirlwind which seized immediately revealing the cloud-swallowing kite in a disheveled appearance.

Yang Qing sighed in relief when he saw her because other than a few ruffled feathers and mild indentation she was mostly okay except for the rope burn around her neck where part of the flood dragon tendon binding rope was tied to.

Yang Qing surmised she had been trying to use the sheer force of her speed to break the rope but it would have been impossible since based on his judgment the flood dragon tendons used in making the

rope were from one that had atleast reached in the middle stages of the palace realm and the craftsmanship was atleast from a blue grade weapon refiner who successfully transformed the tendons into a middle tier monarch grade artifact.

Ellie despite her sturdy body would be hard-pressed to destroy something of such a level not unless she was in the palace stage but if she was the matter wouldn't have gotten this far. She would have been able to defend herself without suffering any losses and if she decided to hide there was no way the company present would have seen through her cloud camouflaging techniques not unless they had special means or physiques like Mao Yunru's that is able to see through most illusion and camouflage techniques that were at the level of her cultivation base.

"I told you to not neglect your training. Instead, you spend your days stealing my fish. You're letting down your bloodline and talent if just three palace stage cultivators are enough to corner you this badly.

If you keep going on like this at this rate the two newcomers may overtake you, especially Haishi," said Yang Qing as he gently chastised her before sighing.

He couldn't be too hard on her since if she wanted to run there was no way the three people present would have caught up with her but she stayed because of him. It was why he decided to let up in the end.

Ellie in the meanwhile had her head lowered in shame and embarrassment the whole time and only raised it when Haishi was mentioned. A defiant will born of crisis seemed to have been ignited in her.

Yang Qing lightly chuckled at this as he sliced the remainder of the rope with his palm. When the rope was down, a green flame that was distinctly similar to the flames from the green flame tree was produced from his hand which he then proceeded to cover the whole body of Ellie with.

Ellie screeched in comfort as the flames covered her, she even spread her wings to ensure no part was left uncovered by the flames.

Once he was done, Yang Qing turned to face the three men who judging by how they were floating in the air without the use of treasures were all in the palace realm.

His gentle look swiftly turned frosty which made those facing him flinch but the golden-haired man soon recovered as a look of confidence appeared on his face.

The orange-red-haired man by his side frowned deeper and deeper once he saw the confident look from the golden-haired man. He exchanged a few glances with the elderly man who only offered a bitter smile in exchange.

"I guess I should thank you all for taking care of my bird when I wasn't around. You even went through the trouble of gifting her a monarch-grade rope around her neck.

We don't know each other but you all went through so much trouble to make sure Ellie over here was well-taken care of. Truly the Red Maple Empire is a place that welcomes its guests with the highest hospitality," Yang Qing said as he took out the token that he was handed at the border.

"It's too good for someone like me, you can have it back since I've had all the hospitality I can take from this place," he added as he tossed the wooden token over to the orange-red-haired man who caught it with a complicated expression.

From his features, Yang Qing guessed he was part of the royal family bloodline and one of the rumored four palace stage experts that the Red Maple Empire had.

Yang Qing didn't know much about him or the rest of the palace stage experts in the royal family since there were thousands and thousands of kingdoms, empires, clans, and organizations that were at the level of the Red Maple Empire, he couldn't remember them all.

But he was willing to bet there was probably a dossier of the royal family member along with the other three palace realm experts, at the main library and the branch headquarters at the Yellow plain county, a small county the size of a city that was at one of the borders between the Red Maple Empire and a rank 3 kingdom under the rule of the Zou clan.

The county was technically in the Red Maple Empire but due to its wars with the neighboring kingdom, it turned into a lawless land where victims of the war on both sides hurdled together.

Stability returned to the place when the Order built a branch there which gradually turned into a buffer zone between the Red Maple Empire and that kingdom. The name of the kingdom was the Five clover kingdom and one of the two rank 3 kingdoms located in his quadrant of evaluations.

"Fellow daoist I..," Just as the orange-red-haired man was about to speak, Yang Qing raised his hands to stop him in his tracks.

"There's no need for us to waste our time here with perfunctory remarks. It's not like whatever you will say will end up with us exchanging laughs over 5,000-year-old wine and good food and becoming sworn brothers at the end.

We are not stupid people here. The general at the border, I think his name was Qin Qiang, must have given you vivid descriptions about me and Ellie here. So there's no way you attacked her thinking she was an ownerless spirit beast but you did so knowing full well she had an owner and I'm sure there's no way she would attack a group of palace stage experts first when she is just at the late stages of the core formation realm.

So A, you are either stealing her wantonly with no care of her owner's thoughts, or B, you did it deliberately to draw me out. Whatever the reason I could care less since what must happen will happen," Yang Qing coldly said.

"And before you try to threaten me with your backgrounds, neither the Golden bamboo pavilion nor the Red Maple Empire will save you from your just rewards," Yang Qing ominously said as he tightly clenched the bamboo stick with sparks of purple lightning occasionally flashing by.

"Fellow daoist there's no need to be rush. We can resolve this amicably without a need for bloodshed. It took a lot of effort for us to reach where we are and it would be a shame to jeopardize it over a little misunderstanding.

I am willing to pay 100 high-grade stones for my slight behavior and if you are willing to part with the cloud-swallowing kite I'm even willing to pay any amount you ask. You already know I'm from the Golden bamboo pavilion so I can back my words," the golden-haired young man said still with poise and confidence though there was still some wariness in his voice.

Yang Qing's feats of breaking the flood dragon tendon binding rope and simultaneously deflecting two attacks from palace stage experts were no easy feat. Were the roles reversed he was not sure he would be able to replicate such a feat. He was both wary and puzzled on how someone who seemed just at the first stage could release such pressure that would overwhelm a third-stage and two second-stage palace realm experts.

He along with the elderly man were both at the second stage while the orange-red-haired man was at the third stage of the palace realm. Every increase in cultivation no matter how minor in the palace realm was a qualitative increase, unlike the lower realms where level skipping fights were common.

Once one reached the palace realm, fighting above your cultivation base was something only the true monsters of cultivation would do. It was why the golden-haired young man decided on diplomacy despite the confidence he had in his backing or their numbers. If a battle was to break out, heavy injuries were a guarantee. He couldn't risk it, especially with the merger underway and the opportunities that came along with it.

Yang Qing who was prepared to fight paused as he asked with a dumbfounded expression,

"You want to buy Ellie?"

"I do. As long as you name the price I'm willing to meet it," said the golden-haired man.

"There are fools everywhere you go no matter how illustrious the background," Yang Qing silently muttered as he made an exhausted sigh.

"Despite her dumb look she has a bloodline that guarantees at the very least she will reach the domain realm when she matures and you want to tell me your Golden bamboo pavilion can afford it? If it could, you'd have more domain experts in your organization since they could just buy them.

I'm a little short on time so the words end here. You need to prepare yourselves. Don't worry I won't kill you since your actions don't warrant it yet but a beating is a must," Yang Qing solemnly said as he let go of the purple lightning bamboo that floated by itself.

"Eight trigrams elemental barrier," Yang Qing said as he brought his palms together. A small circle formed in between those palms before it grew and covered a few kilometers around them enclosing them in a transparent dome.

Chapter 149 Yang Qing Vs Three Palace Stage Experts (2)

The dome grew as it covered a ten-kilometer radius around them. A translucent floor was formed beneath their feet. Other than the floor the rest of the dome took a light greenish hue and had a feel of nature to it.

"We can go all out without worry of damaging the places below us or injuring bystanders," said Yang Qing as he casually began to take a step forward which inadvertently made the three men take a step back.

Yang Qing's move added a new level of fear they did not expect. They could distinctively feel that they would struggle to break out of the barrier he had cast and for some reason, whilst in that dome, they felt like they were in a separate world. Creating mysterious realms and small worlds was something only those at the late stages of the domain realm and above could do with the help of countless treasures with space attributes and strong vitality.

"This..." the orange-red-haired man could not even complete his sentence as he grimly held his sword.

Even the golden-haired man did not have the confident look he wore the whole time since Yang Qing's arrival.

They all had the same thoughts and it was whether Yang Qing was a domain expert pretending he was just a first-stage palace realm expert.

"This isn't a real small world. It's just the effects of a perfected cultivation art that effectively draws out my abilities," Yang Qing lightly said seemingly reading their thoughts.

"Maybe I can gain insights into improving the brilliant ray fist cultivation art with them and share some of those insights with Peng Zhen," Yang Qing silently muttered.

The brilliant ray fist cultivation art was a low-rank blue-grade cultivation art that he had improved on from a low-rank orange-grade cultivation art called the meteor raining fists. He had shared the

cultivation art with Peng Zhen to help him in his life and death duels with the students from the institute during his sentencing.

Though the brilliant ray fist cultivation art was primarily a fist art but when Yang Qing created it, he transformed it into a wholesome art that in addition to fist moves had other variations to it other than just the fist. It was a technique that emphasized speed with force.

"I won't be needing this either," said Yang Qing as the bamboo stick transformed into a light that disappeared into his robe.

His whole demeanor didn't seem to change as he seemed rather casual but deep within the recess of his eyes his pupils had changed color from dark to golden pupils that had flame-like waves in them.

Alarm bells went all over the bodies of the three men.

"Dawn of autumn,"

"Mad bull's descent,"

The orange-red-haired man and the elderly man muttered respectively as their bodies underwent huge transformations.

The orange-red-haired man had transformations in his body. His hair transformed into red vines that spread from his head to the rest of his body. His sword had a woodier feel to it with a red-orange glint on its edge.

Yang Qing could detect a drastic increase in temperature and vitality from the orange-red-haired man.

As for the elderly man, his gaunt appearance changed as he transformed into a middle-aged man with a massive physique. His skin turned darker almost iron-like. On his right hand was a one-hand axe that looked rusty that slowly started producing a red-black baleful aura that spread from the edges of the axe to its hilt till it finally started covering the elderly man like a cloak. His look transformed into a maddened beast of slaughter.

As for the golden-haired man even though there was no change to him but despite that, he was the one who seemed to be the thorniest of the bunch for Yang Qing to deal with. He was covered in high-grade defensive artifacts such as a platinum circlet he had on which was a middle-rank monarch-grade artifact and the robe that had defensive arrays inscribed on it.

"His rank doesn't seem to be low in the Golden bamboo pavilion," muttered Yang Qing as he looked at the fan in the golden-haired young man's hands. It was made of purple feathers and seemed to be releasing undulating waves typical of a high-rank monarch-grade weapon.

"I wonder if I can break them." Yang Qing malevolently grinned as he charged at them. He had transformed into a flaming white light.

Boom!!

An explosive gong sound was created when he slammed his fist against the wing-like gold sand shield that had appeared in front of the golden-haired man. The defensive shield seemed to be an automatic response from the circlet on his head.

There were small cracks on the gold sand shield but it had managed to block the sudden blow from Yang Qing.

"If one blow won't do it then what about a hundred," said Yang Qing.

But just as he was about to strike again the elderly man's attack and the orange-red-haired man's attacks arrived simultaneously.

A black-red wave-like hundred-meter streak that reeked of blood and corrosion charged at Yang Qing from his left side while to his right there was an ocean of orange-red leaves with ferocious sharpness that were aiming to swallow him whole and dice him apart.

Anyone of these attacks could cleave through a whole city and cause tremendous destruction in its wake. A peak core formation expert would be rendered immobile just from the pressure they were

releasing while a palace stage cultivator who had just broken through would do all they could to avoid facing the attack head-on.

Yang Qing barely moved as he took on their attacks.

He swatted the incoming red streak upwards as he effortlessly shuttled around the incoming leaves with extreme speed and precision that he seemed like a thin streak of white light. With every evasion, he destroyed every leaf he passed.

Within a few breaths, the ocean of leaves had already collapsed with Yang Qing rapidly charging at the orange-red-haired man.

"Brilliant hundred-finger descent," Yang muttered as his index finger struck the orange-red-haired man in rapid succession.

Yang Qing's finger strikes moved so fast that they seemed to blur into hundreds of fingers.

The orange-red-haired man kept swinging his sword all around as he defended himself from the strikes that came from different trajectories.

Every strike made his sword creak and his body tremble from the sheer weight of the force. After a dozen strikes his palms were already bleeding and he seemed to be struggling to keep up with the speed attacks.

Soon a couple of them breached his defense as small finger-sized holes appeared on different parts of his body. Luckily thanks to his special physique they kept healing immediately after.

"Interesting ability but I'm afraid it's not enough," Yang Qing softly said as he increased the speed and intensity of his attacks.

However, his attacks paused midway due to a bird's screeching sound behind him. The pause came as a relief for the orange-red-haired man whose whole robe was now covered in holes filled with blood.

Chapter 150 Yang Qing Vs Three Palace Stage Experts (3)

Yang Qing threw a roundhouse kick at the orange-red-haired man as he was turning.

"Momentary distraction is a dangerous thing to have in a battle, your highness," Yang Qing gently said to the orange-red-haired man who was sent to the floor with the kick.

He was bleeding from the nose as a small indentation appeared on the cheek that was just kicked in.

Instead of being livid, he was visibly shaken because if he hadn't tried to deflect some of the weight of the attack with the hilt of his sword he would have lost his eye and suffered even more serious injuries.

"Just who did we provoke?" he bitterly muttered as he threw a complicated gaze towards the source of all this, the golden-haired man who was currently surrounded by a purple peacock that had purple flames around it.

"Fellow daoist we can still go our separate ways and put past grievances behind us," said the golden-haired man.

"It seems having a weapon with an awakened spirit has given you some confidence. If it were more mature I would have considered employing much more serious means but it's only been sentient a little less than five years.

That is hardly enough. I'm sorry 'fellow daoist' I will have to reject your thoughtful offer.

You shouldn't expose your weapon's spirit so easily you know, especially if it's so young and you lacking the abilities to stop your opponent.

Think of this as a life lesson from your fellow daoist here," Yang Qing gently said as his whole look changed.

His hair turned to pure white, down to every part of his body that had a white gentle glow to them as both his iris turned into a full moon.

The temperature in the area seemed to turn cooler with a sense of gentleness and calmness that made the three palace realm experts feel this wasn't a battlefield but a place of rest.

"Return to slumber little one: Slowing tides, grand lunar," Yang Qin gently muttered as a silhouette of a moon rising over a calm ocean appeared behind him.

The purple peacock screeched in defiance but with every second the screech got weaker and weaker till it finally turned into a purple smoke that disappeared into the purple feathered fan.

"Whaat?!!!" the golden-haired man frantically said as his pupils constricted.

"WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY WEAPON?!!!" he madly roared as he frantically charged towards Yang Qing.

"It seems only your cultivation base is the only good thing you have. In terms of mental acuity you're sorely lacking in that regard," Yang Qing indifferently said as his look switched from the white moon radiance-like look to his normal self.

The golden-haired man ignored defending himself as he waved his fan producing huge winds in the form of scythes. Despite attacking in a mad frenzy his attacks were even more powerful than the orange-red-haired man who had a third-level palace realm cultivation base while the golden-haired youth had a second-level palace realm cultivation base.

Yang Qing met the golden-haired man's frenzied attacks head-on as he threw a white-clad fist that caused a mirage in its wake. His fist effortlessly blew apart the wind scythes heading toward him as he charged head-on at the golden-haired man who recklessly charged on to face off against Yang Qing.

The elderly man and the orange-red-haired man also charged especially the former who charged with extreme urgency once he saw the golden-haired man's state.

The three men attacked holding nothing back as Yang Qing welcomed their attacks with ease as he seamlessly transitioned between attack and defense. The dome kept violently shaking as they went on. A white light could be seen rapidly shuttling through the violent chaos.

Ellie, the cloud-swallowing kite who among many things had learned pettiness from Yang Qing was gleefully taking everything in as she comfortably swam in the green flame which not only healed her but also acted as a barrier against the waves produced by the battle.

The battle had gone beyond just a fight of disagreement and instead became a battle for survival for the three men facing off against Yang Qing.

The more the battle raged on, the clearer they became on their disparity with Yang Qing. They had wounds all over their bodies while Yang didn't even have a scratch on his robes no matter how much they attacked. Worse was, his speed and force seemed to be rapidly increasing with time till it reached a point they couldn't attack anymore and could only throw all their focus on defending.

CRACK!!!

The axe of the elderly man got shattered by one of Yang Qing's rapid kicks which went on to slam his torso shattering his ribcage. He violently coughed up blood as his vision turned hazy.

"Young master," he silently muttered as his blurry gaze fell on the golden-haired young man who had lost his glamorous look from before. His hair was all over the place closely sticking to his skin due to sweat and blood.

The defensive circlet he had on that had a platinum silver hue at the beginning was now dark grey in color and had faint cracks on it. Due to Yang Qing's rapid attacks, the automatic defense power on the circlet got rapidly drained till it could no longer independently activate anymore. The golden-haired man would have to constantly feed qi into it which was a rather difficult thing to do since he couldn't afford to spare the qi or the attention it needed to activate it.

His earlier frenzied look had disappeared and was replaced by deep fear as he stared at the green-haired monster gazing calmly at the three of them not showing any sign of stopping.

The orange-red-haired man seemed to have gotten it worse among the three as he was fully covered in blood, his sword was barely holding on, and he was wheezing with only one of his eyes open. He was barely hanging on.

The golden-haired man gritted his teeth as a purple talisman appeared in his hands. He seemed hesitant but then he firmed himself.

"You think I'd just let you activate a talisman," Yang Qing's voice echoed over as the hand that was holding the talisman got shattered at the wrist. Yang Qing kicked the purple talisman away as he flung a grey paper talisman of his own at it.

The grey talisman lit up as black runes lit up from it covering the whole purple talisman which then turned into a grey dull like rock.

"Now we won't have to worry about an accidental release," Yang Qing muttered as he resumed his attack on the golden-haired man before he could process what had just happened.

A one-sided onslaught ensued from that moment on as Yang Qing thoroughly terrorized the three men who were barely hanging on.

After five minutes the elderly man and the orange-red-haired man were already lying unconscious on the floor while the golden-haired man was on his knees with a look of despair on his face as Yang Qing stood above him with a look of calm indifference.

"While I did say I wouldn't kill you but that only applied to the other two. The way I see it, this whole thing happened because of you and the rest agreed on it since they couldn't afford to offend you. Who knows how many stunts like this you have pulled? You must have some pretty powerful backing in the Golden bamboo pavilion to have two palace stage experts follow your every whim. Erasing you could be considered a good deed," Yang Qing calmly said.

He got no response from the golden-haired man who kept muttering why and how over and over.

Yang Qing raised his fist as his gaze turned solemn. A small black whirling circle appeared below his fist as it grew in size by the second.

"I invite nature's mercy upon the unfavorable, to wash the blight of misfortune away. Take your pardon and begin anew. Everything washed away into oblivion to rise once more.

The fist of oblivion."

The golden-haired man was pulled out of his stupor due to the terrifying fluctuations above him. He raised his head and was met with an enormous black hole that seemed like it could swallow the world whole.

He started yelling incoherently as he tried to move backward away from the black hole but all strength had left his body.

"Father help!! HEELP! HELP MEEEE!!!" he madly yelled but alas there was no response.

"A domain father huh..," Yang Qing mumbled.

"Now go in peace fellow daoist," Yang Qing slowly said as he brought his fist down.